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# Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

*Provisional*

**6073**rd meeting

Wednesday, 21 January 2009, 4.30 p.m.

New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Lacroix | (France) |
| *Members*: | Austria | Mr. Mayr-Harting |
| | Burkina Faso | Mr. Kafando |
| | China | Mr. Liu Zhenmin |
| | Costa Rica | Mr. Weisleder |
| | Croatia | Mr. Skračić |
| | Japan | Mr. Okuda |
| | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | Mr. Dabbashi |
| | Mexico | Mr. Heller |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Turkey | Mr. İlkin |
| | Uganda | Mr. Kafeero |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Ms. Brown |
| | United States of America | Ms. DiCarlo |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Bui The Giang |

## Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2009/39)

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09-21525 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 5.35 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Peace consolidation in West Africa**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2009/39)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I propose with the consent of the Council to extend an invitation under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

*It is so decided.*

I invite Mr. Djinnit to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/39, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, to whom I give the floor.

**Mr. Djinnit**: The second report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) (S/2009/39), which is being presented to the Council today, focuses on cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and the activities UNOWA has undertaken since my last presentation to the Council in July. As a relatively small special political mission with a unique regional mandate, UNOWA does not always get the exposure it deserves, and I am grateful for this opportunity to present its work to the Council.

Despite significant progress made in consolidating peace and stability in West Africa, many challenges remain that threaten to derail these positive developments. In addition to well-known problems facing the region, such as youth unemployment, rapid urbanization, corruption and irregular migration, many of the root causes of conflict in a number of West African countries have yet to be addressed in an effective and durable manner.

In the past six months, West Africa has continued to be heavily affected by rising global food prices and food insecurity, compounded by threats of a global recession, raising new concerns about many countries' prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is expected that food insecurity will remain a special challenge to the region over the next few years. In response to that potential threat to stability, UNOWA actively advocates with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and West African leaders regarding the need to take proactive and collective measures to achieve food security. The food crisis also remains a permanent item on the agenda of the regular meetings among the heads of United Nations agencies in West Africa convened by UNOWA.

Another particular concern is the spread of cross-border organized crime, especially drug trafficking. Taking advantage of porous borders and weak State and security institutions, criminal networks are increasingly using West Africa as a transit route for narcotics bound for Europe from Latin America. While criminal networks operated mostly with the complicity of low-level authorities in the past, today they are infiltrating State institutions, fuelling corruption and destabilizing the political and social fabric of nations. UNOWA has therefore stepped up its activities, raising awareness at all levels of leadership about the harmful impact of organized crime on governance and security. In conjunction with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and ECOWAS, UNOWA is also expected to play a lead role in coordinating United Nations inputs into the implementation of the recently adopted ECOWAS Action Plan on drug trafficking.

While West Africa has made considerable progress in consolidating democratic governance, the process suffered major setbacks over the past six months in Mauritania and Guinea, both of which experienced military coups. There were also renewed attempts on the life of the President of Guinea-Bissau from within the country's armed forces. The fact that the coups in Mauritania and Guinea were bloodless is positive. If, however, the resurgence of coups is not addressed in a decisive manner, their potential domino effect across the region should not be underestimated.

UNOWA has endeavoured to foster constructive dialogue among national, regional and international partners and continues to work to facilitate a return to constitutional order in Mauritania and Guinea within the shortest possible time frame. In parallel, an important role that UNOWA can play, together with ECOWAS, is to engage countries of the region in preventive diplomacy, confidence-building and, if necessary, mediation efforts.

Electoral processes and the opportunities and risks that they present are another priority area for the region and for UNOWA. While countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Ghana have provided encouraging examples of peaceful and transparent elections, democratization processes could, if not properly managed, trigger political violence, economic disruption and social strife in fragile societies in the region. Critical elections are envisaged in 2009 in Mauritania, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and the Niger. Continued partnership among the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS will be required to increase the likelihood that electoral processes in the region will be peaceful, transparent, free and fair.

The situation in the fragile Sahel band continues to be a source of concern. UNOWA continues to closely monitor the mediation process related to the rebellion in northern Mali and the situation in the Niger, including the ongoing efforts to convene a regional summit on peace, security and development in Mali.

The role and the capacities of security sector institutions remain major sources of concern in many West African countries. Security sector reform must be seen as a key component of any peacebuilding strategy, with ECOWAS playing a lead role and with the full support of the international community, including the United Nations. In November in Conakry, Guinea, UNOWA initiated a useful regional discussion on the role of the security sector in electoral processes. Joint efforts will need to be undertaken by ECOWAS, the United Nations and other partners to build on that positive experience so that countries in the region can develop a broader security sector reform agenda.

As members are aware, a pivotal role of UNOWA is to promote concerted subregional approaches to peace and security both within the United Nations system and with ECOWAS. In that regard, I am encouraged by the arrangements and effective partnerships developed over the past year with all United Nations entities operating in the subregion and the enthusiasm shown in situating their individual activities within the larger United Nations strategic objective in support of peace and stability in West Africa.

Finally, in my capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, my team and I continue to provide support to the delimitation and demarcation process along the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary. Following the successful completion, on 14 August 2008, of the transfer of authority in the Bakassi peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon, in accordance with the June 2006 Greentree Agreement, their efforts are now focused on expediting the boundary demarcation process, promoting confidence-building measures between the two countries and addressing the needs of affected populations.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Djinnit for his statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*